

REMARKS

Claims 1, 6-8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 33, 49, 56, 63, and 77-82 have been amended and claim 22 has been canceled. Claims 1-4, 6-12, 14-21, and 23-82 are presented for further examination, with claims 1, 11, 17, 33, 49, 56, 63, 70, and 77-82 being independent.

Any grounds which may have existed for the rejection of claims 6-8, 14, and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, are believed obviated by the foregoing amendments to claims 6-8, 14, and 15. In particular, claims 6-8 have been amended to depend from claim 1, claims 14 and 15 have been amended to depend from claim 11, and claims 6, 7, 14, and 15 have been amended to delete recitation of “said concentration”. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of claims 6-8, 14, and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

The rejections of: **(1)** claims 1-4, 6-8, 9-10, 63-65, 67-69, 77, 79, 80, 81, and 82 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0129106 (“Sorensen”) in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0020429 (“Selbrede”) and U.S. Patent No. 5,782,085 (“Steinwandel”), **(2)** claims 6-8, 17-30, 33, 49-51, 53, 54, 55, 66, 70-72, and 74-76 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable over Sorensen in view of Selbrede and Steinwandel and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,288,971 (“Knipp”), **(3)** claims 11-12 and 78 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable over Sorensen in view of Selbrede and Steinwandel and further in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0000198 (“Ishikawa”), **(4)** claims 31-32 and 52 were

rejected as allegedly unpatentable over Sorensen in view of Selbrede and Steinwandel and in view of Ishikawa and further in view of Knipp, (5) claims 14-16 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable over Sorensen in view of Selbrede, Steinwandel and Ishikawa and further in view of Knipp, (6) claims 34-46 and 56-62 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable over Sorensen in view of Selbrede and Steinwandel and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,662,977 ("Motley") and Knipp, and (7) claims 47-48 and 73 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable over Sorensen in view of Selbrede and in view of Motley and Knipp and further in view of Ishikawa, are each respectfully traversed.

Each of amended independent claims 1, 11, 17, 33, 49, 56, 63, 70, and 77-82 recites the features of: (1) switching the mass flow controller from a first mass flow controller of a first capacity to a second mass flow controller of a second capacity larger than said first capacity during the step of increasing the total pressure or concentration of the fluorine-containing gas or species, and (2) that this switching of the mass flow controller is conducted while maintaining the plasma. (See, for example, Figure 13 and Page 29, Line 19 – Page 39, Line 24, of the Present Application).

None of the cited references d the foregoing features of the presently claimed methods. Applicants respectfully submit that in the cited references, control of the fluorine-containing gas or species during the plasma ignition step is inevitably poor, resulting in poor reliability of plasma ignition, in view of the

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fact that the mass-flow controller has to be operated near the lower edge of the operational range during the ignition process.

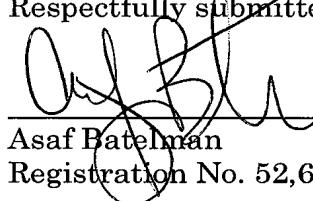
In view of the foregoing, the application is respectfully submitted to be in condition for allowance, and prompt favorable action thereon is earnestly solicited.

If there are any questions regarding this reply or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #010986.57272US).

Respectfully submitted,

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